

27 Sept 65

Dear Robert and Mary,

It made me very happy to get your nice cards from Colorado. It cheers me up very much to hear from you and I hope you will write again and tell me what you have been doing. I know you would like to hear from me, too, and I will do my best to be a better letter-writer than I have been in the past.

In answer to your question, Mary, Yvonne's address is: Yvonne Srenic, 1613 30th St. N.W., Washington, D.C. I'm sure ~~you~~ she would like to hear from you; she liked both of you very, very much. Robert tells me that you are interested in getting your hands on those Japanese dolls. Well, that may have to wait for quite a while—~~until I get back—what arrangement~~ I have bought you some Vietnamese dolls, which I will have to arrange to send through customs here.

I hope you both had a good time in Colorado, and are glad to be back in school now. It was marvelous having you with me. I am only sorry that I wasn't able to take ~~an~~ a real vacation with you, as I had planned, and that I had to spend the days clearing out of my office and getting ready to go. But it was very lucky that we had planned to have you come when you did, so that I was able to be with you before I left. I enjoyed it very much, and I think a great deal of all the things we did together. (I can still see Mary racing around the Washington Monument, our first night). Robert, have you had a chance to try out your tennis? It's obvious that you're ready to start learning in earnest.

Do you remember, our first night, reading Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, Robert? You remember that I had you bring some copies of it, because I felt sure that someone in Vietnam would recognize that it applied perfectly to their situation. Today I had the chance to use it: Prime Minister Ky wanted us to help him write a speech, and I got out our quotation and had my boss, Gen. Lansdale, take it over to Ky to *show* him. The last paragraph is:

"With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace, *among ourselves* and with all nations."

I don't know if Ky will use it in his speech, but I'm glad that he had a chance to see it; I think the people of South Vietnam would be glad to know that we are able to understand ~~their~~ problems because we had a civil war ourselves, and also to realize that ~~how~~ we are united, free and rich in spite of our own civil war. And Lincoln's thought, "With malice toward none, with charity for all" is ~~important~~ for them to hear. So I *owe* the chance to pass this on to your visit, and our trip to the Lincoln Memorial (I told this to all the *men* I am working with).



I have been working very hard ever since I arrived, with not a day off yet (except one day when I was sick). But it is very interesting work, and I am very glad to be here. My main regret is that it will be a while before I can see you again (how long, I don't know exactly). I miss you both very much, every hour. One thing that makes me miss you so constantly is that the children of South Vietnam all seem to remind me of you. They are very pretty, friendly, active and funny; they are really the nicest children I have seen anywhere in the world, except for you two. I'll bet you would like to play with them. Especially in the villages outside of Saigon, they come crowding up to me--because I'm an American--shouting all together, "Okay! Okay! Hello! Hello!" which is all the English they know, except for "Number one!" which means, "very good...the best" ("Number ten" means "the worst"). They like to pluck at the hair on my arms, because Vietnamese people don't have hairy arms and it seems very strange and funny to them.

I took several rides in a motorlaunch along the Bassac River, near the Cambodian border, and as we would pass a village, every hundred yards or so, the children would come pouring down to the water's edge to wave at us and shout "Hello! Okay!" They would be very happy when we waved back (one little boy was so delighted he jumped off the pier in glee, with his legs outstretched, and landed in the water on his back). My arm got tired from waving; I felt like a railroad engineer, waving at kids in the prairie.

Then when we walked through the jungle (I had to carry a carbine and pistol, and wear a camouflaged jungle uniform they call a "tiger suit"), when we passed a hamlet (which is a small village) the children would crowd after us. One little boy threw a nut at me, for fun, and I picked it up and made it disappear, which they all thought was wonderful.

(If you would like to see what the countryside looked like, see the movie, "Lord Jim," which was filmed in Cambodia).

One other thing I did on that trip was a ride on an "air-boat," which is a boat that has an airplane propeller mounted up on the back instead of a regular boat propeller in the water; it rides on mud or on an inch or two of water, so it can go across rice paddies. We rode across the Bassac River at about 45 miles an hour straight toward what looked like a solid river bank; I didn't know what was going to happen, and I was quite nervous that the driver--who had an insane grin on his face--would not turn away in time. Instead he drove right into the bank, which turned out to be young rice (which grows like green wheat), and we shot through miles of rice paddies on the few inches of water in which the rice is growing. It was a very strange sensation, because you couldn't see the water at all (except behind us), only the fields of growing rice all around us; it was like driving at 45 miles an hour through an open field, and I kept expecting to hit a rock or a log or a wall, but apparently there is nothing at all to hit. The rice just opened as we passed through it and closed behind us.

I will tell you more about Vietnam in my next letter, but I want to get this off, after waiting so long.

I love you,